

THE SOCIAL PIRATES

The Newest Kalem Picture Now Being Presented at the Leading Motion Picture Theatres in Greater New York

Plot by George Bronson Howard
Novelization by Hugh C. Weir

Story No. 4

A WAR OF WITS

Two American girls, Mona Hartley and Mary Burnett, set about punishing the "Wolves of Society" through their check books. This is the story of their fourth adventure.



A DISTINGUISHED LOOKING, BEARDED MAN, OF THE PROFESSIONAL TYPE, WAS LISTENING TO THE DISPUTE. HE SMILED AS IF IT WERE AN EXCELLENT JOKE. MARY AND MONA EXCHANGED MEANING GLANCES.

I AM TIRED of the city," said Mona Hartley. She was looking from the window of the little apartment she shared with Mary Burnett, her chum, and, in a sense, her partner. "Did you ever see such a day?"

A high wind drove a mixture of rain and hail and snow against the window. The streets were covered with a treacherous, half frozen slush, that sent pedestrians and horses down constantly, slipping, sliding, falling as often as they kept their feet. It was an ugly day, dangerous to health, trying to the temper.

"It's awful!" said Mary, coming to the window and looking out with a shiver of disgust.

"We ought to get away," said Mona. "Can't we go South, Mary—or North, for that matter? I wouldn't care which—either sunshine, or a steady cold would be better than this."

With a firm gesture Mary drew down the shades and switched on the electric light.

"A little mental science is the treatment for you!" she said, with determination. "Now—it's cold and clear outside, and it's late, so that it's dark. We're glad to be home, after a brisk walk—and we'll read the evening papers!"

Mona laughed and sank, still smiling, into a chair, while Mary telephoned down for the afternoon papers to be sent to them. In a few moments they were both settled in easy chairs, reading. And suddenly Mona exclaimed:

"Mary—listen! We can't afford a vacation—but there's no reason why we shouldn't go South on business, is there?"

"What now?" asked Mary, dropping her own paper.

"Well, there's a story here from Yellow Springs—one of those society page stories that the hotel correspondents sent out. Mary—Lettie McLean is there!"

"Lettie—spending the money rooms cost at Yellow Springs prices! You're seeing things, Mona!"

"I'm not! It's true! She's scared—rheumatism! Gout! Sciatic! Just the sort of things you'd expect her to have!"

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he heard that was interesting, as it turned out. What they saw was a woman well over sixty, dressed in faded black, with a shabby shawl about her thin shoulders and a bonnet, long out of style, perched upon her thin gray hair. This was a formidable Letty McLean, who was supposed to be the richest woman in the world and was certainly the meanest. Her maid brought her out to her accustomed chair, where the sun was strongest, and in a few moments her doctor bustled up—a young man, energetic and forceful. At once Letty broke out into a sharp tirade against him.

"You robber!" she cried, in a high, nervous voice. "Just because I'm

to write some letters."

It was three days before the answers to the inquiries that Mary had made came. On second thought she had telegraphed instead of writing—had had a sort of code, to defy possible curiosity concerning herself. Meanwhile Letty McLean was a standstill so far as Mrs. McLean was concerned. She had heaped more reproaches on Doctor Brown, and he had finally been angered to such a point that he threw up her case and refused to treat her.

This had given the bearded man his chance. Mona had learned that he was registered as Doctor Ransom, and he had managed, in some way, to insinuate himself into Mrs. McLean's good graces. So it had come about that it was he, and not Brown, who was now her physician. Moreover, his treatment had already proved itself beneficial. After two days Letty was able to walk with more freedom and her pain seemed considerably reduced.

"They say it's really Doctor Brown's treatment that has helped her," Mona reported. "I've got to be quite friendly with her maid. She says Mrs. McLean didn't give him treatment a fair chance—that he had told her from the start that the effect wouldn't be apparent at once, but took time to develop."

"Keep up with her maid," advised Mary. "I shouldn't wonder at all if there might be a chance for you to succeed her."

"I've thought of that, too," said Mona, with a shudder. "I can't think of having to be a slave to that nasty old woman, even for a few days! Still—I won't back out, if that seems to be the way!"

"I'm puzzled about this Doctor Ransom," said Mary. "I wish they'd hurry up and answer my telegram! Every time I see him I'm more certain that I've seen him before somewhere, but there's some puzzling thing that cludes me when I try to remember him. It's as if he'd changed his appearance in some fashion."

"I know," Mona nodded. "It bothers me the same way. There ought to be a mail from the North in now—I'll go down and see if anything has come."

In a few minutes she was back, and brought a couple of letters with her. Each opened one, and each cried out in delight.

"Doctor—Hyoscine!" cried Mary. "That's who it is! The man who was so nearly caught and sent to prison in some medical fraud! Do you remember? His real name wasn't known!"

"And they called him Hyoscine because he's the man who suggested the way that drug could be used criminally! Oh, of course! And I know why we were puzzled, too—it's that beard! He has grown that lately."

"Yes, here's a photograph of him without the beard," said Mary. "It's the same man—there's no sort of doubt about that! And he's Letty McLean's doctor!"

"Don't you suppose he's become her doctor just to bleed her and get her money from her?"

"He couldn't have any other ob-

ject, could he? A man with his record."

"Of course not!" said Mona.

"Mona, I'd about decided that we might as well go home! But I think Doctor Hyoscine may save the day for us. We couldn't have done anything with Letty. But if he gets a lot of money out of her—why shouldn't we get it out of him, in turn?"

Mona stared at her.

"I don't see how," she said, doubtfully.

"Neither do I yet! But the man's a swindler. That's why he has a chance with Letty! No honest man could get anything from her! And unless I'm greatly mistaken we'll find that he has some weakness that will play into our hands."

"I'd love to think so!" said Mona. "I loathe the man—he's the sort I've never been able to understand. And that type is supposed to be fascinating to women, too!"

"I think he banks a good deal on that," said Mary, with a dangerous gleam in her eye. "That's one reason I'd like to teach him a lesson."

"Well, I'm with you there! What's the first move? I think I'm under your orders this time!"

"Try to make Letty's maid as discontented as you can. As for me—I've got to make friends with Doctor Hyoscine. I think I've had a little release and that I need a doctor."

"I'll call Doctor Hyoscine, if that's the case," said Mona.

But Mary had a better plan than that even. A day or so later, in the corridor near her room, she had a fainting spell—and timed it so that it was Doctor Hyoscine who saw her and went to her aid. Under his skilled ministrations she soon came to herself, and was touching in her gratitude. The doctor was greatly impressed.

"You must be careful," he told her. "And I really think you'd better let me keep an eye on you in a professional way, for the next few days. Unless, of course, you already have a doctor of your own."

"I haven't," said Mary, wistfully.

"Oh, I'd be so glad if you would, doctor! I'm sure I could trust you—and I've had so many unfortunate experiences with doctors since I have been ill."

"You may depend upon me!" he assured her.

Mrs. McLean, meantime, became more and more doubtful for her unfortunate maid to live with. Doctor Hyoscine, it seemed, fascinated her. She submitted without difficulty to his rules and instructions, and the man, even if he was a charlatan, unquestionably knew the proper treatment for her disease. The diet he ordered for her and the course of water and herbs brought about a swift improvement in her condition. She was greatly impressed, and she was tickled, too, by the deference of his manner toward her. He had, moreover, done a very clever thing. He had mentioned, timidly, the matter of money, and he had waved the suggestion aside.

"My dear Mrs. McLean!" he had said. "Please do not let us refer to such sordid matters. If, at the end of your stay, you are benefited, I will be a matter of form, present a bill. But the amount will be nominal, only—simply enough to let you feel that you have paid me. I am a surgeon, not a tradesman!"

"I have no need of money!" he went on grandly. "My private means, fortunately, make it unnecessary for me to depend upon my profession. I take only such cases as interest me, and seem likely to contribute to the store of knowledge which will, ultimately, benefit humanity at large. Yours is such a case, or I would not be attending you."

This was a well planned and executed clever assault on two of the weakest points in the old woman's armor. He appealed to her cupidity, as she was also with a subtle flattery to her vanity. Every one who is

Before Dr. Hyoscine had finished his first visit Mona had penetrated the secret of his plan for mulcting Mrs. McLean of her wealth. He had a way of extracting money from her much easier than any that the two girls had dreamed of.

rule—sometimes she fills the sum in herself. It doesn't seem to make much difference! "Heavens above!" said Mary, overcome for a moment with wonder, so that she couldn't even laugh. But only for a moment. Averting the threatened fit of hysterics, she begged for information as to details.

"Why, he is using Hyoscine, of course, and I suppose you know that that's about the same thing as scopolamine—if you know what THAT is! If you don't, I'll tell you—it's a narcotic, hypnotic drug. When you have had an injection of it you're not unconscious, as you are with ether or even morphine. You're just sort of—oh, dopey. You're not conscious of pain, but you can talk and move. And you don't remember anything when it stops working in your system."

"Oh!" said Mary, with a deep long breath. "That is clever, Mona! But we must have known it would have to be something clever!"

"It seems she's got a special check book—at least an extra one—with her. He suspected that, and when he had her under the influence of the drug he made her get it out. Then he had her hide it in a new place, which she would only remember when she had taken the drug! Do you see?"

"She'd notice the missing checks, you mean, if she saw the book when she was herself?"

"Of course! And, as it is, she does not see them. She won't find out until she gets her next statement from her bank! Oh, it's wonderful—from his point of view. You see—she's just given him the checks. He will say they were for professional services, and I don't see what she can answer to that. He doesn't help her—naturally. No wonder she's free from pain out of the time!"

Mary, the invalid, set out to win the doctor's affection. In a few days she and Doctor Hyoscine were on terms that approached intimacy, and he was a frequent and welcome caller in her rooms—her supposed illness being excuse enough. Mary, of course, studied him attentively. And she soon decided that the man's great weakness was his love for gambling; that it was upon this side that he might be most easily approached.

Frequently he was her secret in the Casino. Mary herself did not play. "Oh, I have no secret in the Casino," she said. "It's this public play that I don't care for. And—must I confess it?—I have a vulgar fondness for poker, of all games."

"I couldn't play that here! Some time, though, perhaps, we could have a game in my room—and I'll show you that I'm a good sport, as you men say."

Hyoscine smiled. He thought he knew the sort of poker a woman would want to play! However, he would be willing to endure even a petticoat game for the sake of her company. He had walked pretty far into Mary's trap, this witty doctor who had proved too clever for Letty McLean herself!

Mary had seen that she must have help. And she was not surprised when a day or so after her talk about poker with Hyoscine a bored young man bowed to her on the terms. She knew him as Marty McMurtha, whose specialty was the impersonation of a young man of wealth.

"Ah—Mr. Winthrop, isn't it?" she said. "Doctor, you must meet Mr. Winthrop—John Hyde Winthrop of Boston. He and I are always meeting at places like this!"

"Oh, one does, you know," said Winthrop. "Nice place this—healthy, too, eh, doctor?"

Dr. Hyoscine smiled a little. Winthrop did a good deal to remove any faint and lingering doubts he had still cherished concerning Mary. The man was irreproachable. He was dressed in the latest fashion. Speech, manner, appearance, all proclaimed the man of good family, the refined, successful Bostonian. Moreover, it was quite plain that he saw in Mary a most attractive woman, and that she was by no means indifferent to nor displeased by his interest in her. Dr. Hyoscine saw a rival—and naturally his own interest in Mary increased at once.

That night Hyoscine, calling to see Mary, was met by her maid. "Give me the money!" said Mary. "And now—write what I tell you!"

So it was that, when the effect of the drug wore off, he found himself alone in Mary's apartment. The girl had fastened a hidden spring, and a tiny needle that had forced into his veins an injection of the very drug that was his chief reliance! Caught in his own trap it was not long before the drug took effect upon him. A stupor overcame him. And in a few minutes he was as much at Mary's mercy as Mrs. McLean had been at his. She smiled triumphantly as she saw this.

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WILL BE PUBLISHED SATURDAY, APRIL 22



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